



Greater Yellowstone Coalition

America's Voice for a Greater Yellowstone | LANDS • WATERS • WILDLIFE

February 17, 2015

Montana Senate
Agriculture, Livestock, and Irrigation Committee

Re: Senate Joint Resolution No. 11 - SUPPORT

Dear Chairman Taylor Brown and Members of the Agriculture, Livestock, and Irrigation Committee,

We write to express our support for Senate Joint Resolution No.11 ("SJ11"), requesting that the United States Department of Agriculture and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reconsider the appropriateness of listing *Brucella abortus* as a bioterrorist agent to help facilitate research into the transmission of the pathogen to cattle and domestic bison and to develop an effective livestock vaccine. We support the resolution and thank Senator Mike Phillips for introducing this important legislation.

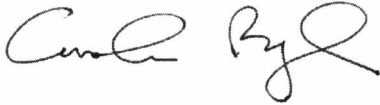
The Greater Yellowstone Coalition (GYC) is a regional conservation organization based in Bozeman, MT with offices in Idaho and Wyoming and over 40,000 members and supporters from across the country and within Montana. Our mission is to protect the lands, waters, and wildlife of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, now and for future generations. GYC has a long history of involvement with issues surrounding bison and brucellosis management and has spent more than 20 years working with landowners, agencies, and other organizations to find resolution to this issue.

The stated goals of the Interagency Bison Management Plan (IBMP) include maintaining a wild, free-ranging bison population and reducing the risk of brucellosis transmission from livestock to cattle. However, the requisite infrastructure and strict regulations associated with *Brucella abortus* listed as a Select Agent, make research cost-prohibitive and difficult, diminishing the likelihood of effective livestock vaccine development and reducing susceptibility of livestock to brucellosis.

As stated in the resolution, final eradication of brucellosis may well be impossible in Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming as long as the reservoir of *Brucella abortus* in Greater Yellowstone elk and bison exists. Developing an effective cattle vaccine would significantly reduce the costly risk of transmission of *Brucella abortus* to Montana's livestock producer and the threat of heavy-handed management of our treasured wildlife. Furthermore, while other strains of *Brucella* such as *B. melitensis* and *B. suis* are highly pathogenic and known to pose a real danger to humans and animals, *B. abortus* rarely infects humans, is easily treated, and is not associated with life

threatening health concerns. Thus, we feel that removing *Brucella abortus* from the Select Agent list or adding it to a lower tier of pathogens to allow greater flexibility for research is warranted. We ask for your support of Senate Joint Resolution No.11.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Caroline Byrd".

Caroline Byrd
Executive Director
Greater Yellowstone Coalition

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Shana Dunkley".

Shana Dunkley
Wildlife Program Associate
Greater Yellowstone Coalition